

Sweet (16) Jesus: Kansas State's Tang Says 'Coaching is Ministry'

It isn't rare—even these days—for an athlete or a coach to give praise to God following a victory or a winning championship. Tim Tebow made it popular, and now you can see it almost every weekend after many sports events.

Which, of course, isn't a bad thing. As Christians, we should like to see even more of it.

But what you might not see or hear is a coach referring to his job as a “ministry.” In his first season as the head man at Kansas State University, Jerome Tang sees it as his kingdom duty to not only teach his players how to grow to be the best basketball players they can be, but also to be teach them how to be solid family leaders and great men of God as they move forward into the prime of their lives.

“I'd like to thank my Lord and savior Jesus Christ for this opportunity that He's given me, the many blessings that He's placed on my life,” Tang said after Sunday's 75-69 victory over Kentucky that sent his Wildcats into the Sweet 16 of the 2023 NCAA Tournament. “I know my profession is coaching, but my calling and my passion is ministry.

“First and foremost I would like to thank the good Lord for this opportunity.”@KStateMBB head coach @CoachJTang gives thanks to the Lord after a second round win in the 2023 NCAA Tournament! #marchmadness

– Sports Spectrum (@Sports_Spectrum) March 20, 2023

“And I love being able to spend time around these young men and just help them to grow and become great husbands who are

going to be great fathers and leaders in their community. It's just so much fun to do it through the game of basketball."

Kansas State will take on Michigan State Thursday night for the right to advance to the Elite Eight, which would put the Wildcats three victories shy of winning a national championship.

Picked to finish last in the Big 12 Conference in a pre-season media poll after a 14-17 season a year ago, Kansas State is 25-9 under Tang this season.

SWEET 16 BABBBY#KStateMBB x #MarchMadness

– K-State Men's Basketball (@KStateMBB) March 19, 2023

Tang previously spent several years at Baylor University, where he helped to guide the Bears to the 2021 national championship. Baylor is coached by Scott Drew, another bold and devoted Christian coach.

A year ago, Drew told Sports Spectrum magazine that Tang had prayed about the head coaching opening at Kansas State.

"When he felt like God led him somewhere, he went," Drew told Sports Spectrum. "He's been more than ready for a long time. He just didn't have the calling to go. I know no one is going to cheer louder or harder for them than I will, except when we play. He's going to do a great job at Kansas State."

A prophetic statement, indeed.

 Prior to his team's victory over Kentucky on Sunday, Tang said the challenges of coaching at a high level have been difficult and the sacrifices have been many. But, he said, he wouldn't have it any other way.

"It's difficult to do what we do, but I wouldn't want to be doing anything else," Tang said. "Anything in life that's

worth accomplishing or great is going to have difficulties in it. I'm thankful to be in a position where the things that are important to me—character, integrity, love, faith—I get to pour into my young men every day. I wouldn't want anybody else doing it." {eoa}

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Shawn A. Akers *is the online editor at Charisma Media.*